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ITALY AND THE TRIPLICE.

BY SALVATORE CORTESI.

"ITALY is now going through a difficult but valuable period for her future; she has become the Don Juan of diplomacy—that is to say, she is in the embarrassing position of having to choose between Donna Anna and Donna Elvira, or, to be more exact, between her allies and her friends." This is how one of the most prominent diplomatists of Europe has defined the present situation of the peninsula. The truth is that Italy, without having the ambition to be a real Don Juan in her foreign policy, has always aspired to protect her interests by being in good relations with all her neighbors. She understands that it is only through a long period of peace that she can develop her internal resources, many of which are still in a virgin state, and bring about that resurrection of her gifted sons of the Southern provinces which will prepare the way for further greatness to come.

The present young Kingdom was not yet entirely united when, in 1869, she was asked to participate in a Triple Alliance with France and Austria to oppose Prussia, whose aspirations towards supremacy in Europe were already evident. The scheme failed through the refusal of France, due especially to the influence of the Empress Eugénie, to withdraw her troops from Rome and therefore allow the Italians to occupy their historic capital. When Count Nigra, then Italian representative at Paris, made the solution of the Roman question a condition *sine quâ non* to the conclusion of the alliance, Emile Ollivier answered that to abandon the Pope would be cowardice of which France would never be guilty. Count de Beust, Austrian Chancellor, insisted to the very last moment, and General Türr went purposely to Paris, but received, on July 29th, 1870, the definite answer from the Duc de Gramont, Minister of Foreign Affairs, that

the least concession about Rome was impossible—" *si l'Italie ne veut pas marcher qu'elle reste.*" Less than two months thereafter, France was defeated and Italy entered Rome.

From that moment the whole of Europe has been—although no Power will publicly confess it—under the constant preoccupation of a new war, the war of *revanche*. Italy at first thought she might be able to balance herself between the two rivals, trying to especially propitiate France, which, more than any other country, could be injurious to Italian interests in the Mediterranean; and, at the same time, she did all in her power not to come to a rupture with Austria, notwithstanding the Irredentist agitation which claimed the completion of the Kingdom by the occupation of Trent, Triest and Dalmatia. She hoped that a favorable occasion would arise on which that rectification of frontier which would have been one of the conditions of the proposed Triplice in 1869 would be possible; but a first great disillusion awaited her at the Berlin Congress of 1878, when she was practically the only country which, being isolated, obtained no advantages, while to Austria was granted the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Italians thought should have brought in exchange the cession to them of a portion of the Province of Trent. More than ever, Italy's hopes turned to France, so much so that she refused to intervene with England in Egypt so as not to hurt the susceptibilities of her neighbor, as all the statesmen of that time, Menabrea, Nigra, Corti, Visconti Venosta, Cairoli, Mancini—the last being legal adviser of de Lesseps—thought that neither Italy nor England could do anything in the Mediterranean without France, and, of course, much less against her opposition. The dream most cherished was a triple co-dominion in Egypt between England, France and Italy, and such an understanding as to guarantee to Italy the possession of Tunis, which, with its 50,000 Italian inhabitants, was considered a continuation of Sicily, while its occupation was for the peninsula of greater strategical importance than for the Republic.

In 1877 Prince Bismarck had already informed Count di Robilant, Italian Ambassador to Vienna, through Count Andrassy, that, while Austria would have a free hand in Bosnia and Herzegovina, no obstacle would be raised by the Central Empires to an Italian occupation of Tunis. Rome, however—always not to offend France—rejected the idea even during the Berlin

Congress, when the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count von Bülow, father of the present Chancellor, confidentially informed Count Corti, Italian Delegate, that he was himself disposed to submit to discussion the question of Italy's going to Tunis. Then Prince Bismarck, who was working to separate Italy from France, made the same proposition to the latter; and, notwithstanding the assurances the French Cabinet had given on this subject to Premier Cairoli, the Republic occupied Tunis in April, 1881, arousing a storm of indignation throughout the peninsula. Strong remonstrances were attempted by Rome; but France made it understood that she was ready for any event, including the capture of Sardinia and the landing of troops at Civitavecchia, while Italy was far from being prepared for war-like enterprises. Contemporaneously, Prince Bismarck frightened Italy with a threat to reopen the Roman question, remarking that, after the constitution of the new Kingdom, the Pope was in Rome either as a prisoner, if he maintained an irreconcilable attitude towards the State, or in a kind of subjection, if he came to an understanding with it. It was, therefore, in the interest of all Powers with Catholic subjects to make their voice heard as to the position made for the Pontiff. It is even asserted that, when Dr. Busch, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, came to Rome, he had the secret mission from Bismarck of proposing to the Pope to temporarily go himself and transport the Papal Court to Fulda. Very likely in all this there was nothing but the desire to produce a certain effect, a design which was perfectly accomplished, as Italy, to escape so many threats, sought refuge in an alliance with Germany, receiving as answer that to go to Berlin it was necessary to pass through Vienna. This led, in October, 1881, to King Humbert's paying the Emperor Francis Joseph that visit which has never been returned, as Italy insisted that any return visit should take place in Rome, while the Vatican decided to excommunicate any Catholic ruler who should visit the Eternal City as guest of the Quirinal. Thus on May 20th, 1882, the first treaty of the Triple Alliance was concluded, consisting of a guarantee of reciprocal territorial integrity among the three contracting parties.

I have recapitulated the principal facts which brought about the Triple Alliance in order that the atmosphere of the international situation of that time might be understood. France,

still burning with the defeats and humiliations she had suffered, was so sure of the attachment of Italy, bound to her by historical, racial and economic ties, that she neglected her and gradually treated her as a French Prefecture. This attitude and the entire disregard of Italian interests, which culminated with the occupation of Tunis, created between the two countries the abyss which Prince Bismarck had for long been preparing, in order to isolate the Republic, and form round Germany such a union of Powers as would render vain any attempt to disturb the organization of Europe as established after 1870. Italy was, therefore, to a certain extent, obliged to enter the alliance which Germany and Austria had already concluded on October 7th, 1879.

This first treaty of the Triple Alliance was in reality to the entire advantage of Germany, although it had the appearance of recognizing perfect equality between the three Powers, as it guaranteed the territorial *status quo* to each. It must be considered that for Germany the territorial *status quo* was the supreme, indeed unique, interest she had in Europe; was the reason for which the last war had been fought, and for which a new one had been threatened; was, in other words, a question of life or death for her, of maintaining or losing her supremacy on the Continent. On the contrary, the interests of Austria and Italy were not, and are not, limited to the maintenance of their territorial *status quo*. Austria is threatened by what may take place outside her own territory, chiefly in the Balkans; Italy, independently of the maintenance of her territorial *status quo*, has her paramount interests in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic; so, while in the original Triple Alliance Germany had the sum of her interests guaranteed by the other two Powers, the latter could not count on Germany if their interests were threatened or injured outside their frontier. Italy entered the Alliance after Tunis and because of Tunis, showing that her chief object was her interests in the Mediterranean, and to avoid a paramount French preponderance, which would have been inevitable if she had remained attached to France. This last purpose was attained; but, when her other interests were not assured, the alliance lost fifty per cent. of its value in the eyes of the Italians.

Another equivocal point in the Triplice was the statement that its only object was the maintenance of peace and that, therefore, it could not give umbrage to any one. The patriotic

atmosphere of France, anxious for revenge after Sedan, must be thought of to understand what the real meaning of peace was for her. It represented a coercion more hateful than war, as it prevented her from again facing her rival, whom, if alone, as in 1870, she thought she might meet with great probability of success. The Powers co-operating in rendering this conflict impossible could not be considered by France but as enemies, almost as much so as if the Alliance had been concluded for aggression against her. Signor Crispi, the strongest supporter of the Alliance, speaking of it before Parliament, on February 4th, 1888, said that it was powerful enough to "impose peace." In conclusion, Germany had nothing more to take from France and her only object was, and is, to continue to defeat her with peace. It was under Crispi that the rupture between France and Italy culminated, making even a war seem probable. It was under him that a military agreement was planned between the three allies, by which, in case of France attacking Germany, Italy pledged herself to send part of her troops through Austria into Baden to fight the invaders. France, however, did not move, understanding the impossibility of fighting alone a combination of nearly 150,000,000 people, not to speak of the *entente* between England and Italy which, under Lord Salisbury, took the character of a real alliance.

These circumstances led to a change in the Triple Alliance which is not generally known, and which was especially urged by Count di Robilant, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Depretis Cabinet, from June, 1885, to July, 1887, and who had never been favorable to the union with the Central Empires. His idea was that Italy, being the weakest, should not have run after the Central Powers, that she should be placed in the alliance on a footing of perfect equality with the others, and that she should insist on having all her interests adequately protected. When Bismarck asked Count di Robilant if he was disposed to renew the Alliance, he let a considerable time elapse and then gave an uncertain answer, making it understood that according to his opinion the special interests of Italy were not sufficiently guaranteed. Bismarck wrote again inviting the Count to formulate the Italian desires, and the note of the Italian Minister was taken both by Bismarck and Kalnoky as the basis for the renewal of the Triple Alliance, for which instead of one single treaty,

as in 1882, three different ones were concluded, one of the most important additions being the agreement that neither Italy nor Austria can undertake any action which might alter the *status quo* in the East without being in accord with the allies.

The Triple Alliance originated in Bismarck's mind when the rivalry between him and Gortchakoff rendered the continuation of a Russo-German understanding impossible. Russia, however, at that time was not yet ready for an alliance with France, and Bismarck in 1884, immediately after the change in the Russian succession and the retirement of Gortchakoff, at the meeting of Skierniewice, concluded a secret understanding with St. Petersburg, which was never communicated to the allied Powers and lasted until the retirement of the Iron Chancellor, who had thus succeeded in completely isolating France.

The Vatican, the policy of which was then directed by Cardinal Rampolla, participated considerably in bringing about the understanding between Paris and St. Petersburg. Indeed, the Secretary of State of Leo XIII had conceived what, from the point of view of the Papacy, aspiring to reconquer the Temporal Power, was a vast and ingenious plan. The Holy See had lost its States as a consequence of the withdrawal of the French troops from Rome, and through the defeat of France by Germany. France, thought the Sicilian Cardinal, is too grand, too proud, too rich a nation to remain passive under the humiliation inflicted upon her. Let us put our diplomacy, our influence throughout the world, at her service; let us identify ourselves with her cause to such an extent that the inevitable day on which her *revanche* comes that of the Papacy will come also. The Vatican archives contain documents which prove that Cardinal Rampolla had grounds to consider it sure that, should the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph occur, his successor, then Archduke Rudolf, would not continue in the Triple Alliance, being impatient of what he considered a kind of subjection to Germany, and the constant irritation of Italy's *Irredentism*. Rampolla, therefore, dreamed of another Triple Alliance between France Russia and Austria, helped, if necessary, by Spain, where his influence was great, he having been Councillor at the Nunciature there in 1875, and Nuncio in 1882. The tragic death of Archduke Rudolf, in the beginning of 1889, did not change the plans of the Vatican, as they always believed that on the disappearance

of the old Emperor they would have his heir and the Court in their hands. It was this policy which cost Cardinal Rampolla the tiara in the Conclave of 1903. What they had not calculated upon was the change which meanwhile took place in France, where the attempt of Leo XIII to transform the Monarchical and Nationalist parties into good Republicans was a complete failure, and where the feeling against Italy gradually softened.

Especially in Signor Crispi's time the Republic fought Italy in all possible ways, wishing to demonstrate that, France being practically the only commercial market of the peninsula and her only financial centre, Italy could not live without her. For ten years, the young Kingdom went through one of the most disastrous of crises, but it came out in a better position, as its products, instead of being dependent on France, had found new outlets in Germany, in Austria, in the Balkans and in South America; and Paris, which had had the illusion of being able to starve Italy, saw her gradually prosper. The renewal of the Triple Alliance by the Marquis di Rudini, in 1891, before it expired and for a double period of time, did not create in France the resentment of past times, it having been explained that all clauses which might have appeared hostile to the western neighbor had been eliminated, and that the Roman Cabinet would be ready to publish the treaty if the other parties agreed. The second Rudini administration, in 1896, has the merit of having laid down the basis of a *rapprochement* between the two countries, through the negotiations for a commercial treaty, ably conducted by Signor Luzzatti, to take the place of the tariff war which by that time was more injurious to the Republic than to the Kingdom. France had learned that Italy would not allow herself to be treated under any aspect as a *quantité négligeable*, while the successful way in which she emerged all the stronger from her difficulties gave her a greater importance in the European concert. Marquis Visconti Venosta, when Minister of Foreign Affairs, took advantage of this fortunate situation to conclude a special agreement with Austria regarding Albania, the two countries pledging themselves to respect the *status quo*, and, on the desire of Italy, the institution of a national Government should the Turkish dominion cease there. He also concluded an understanding with France, so much talked of during the Algeiras Conference, by which Italy disinterested herself in the settle-

ment of Morocco and received in exchange the assurance that France would not put any obstacle in the way of an eventual occupation of Tripoli by her.

By this time, the relations between France and Italy had resumed such cordiality that many politicians in Paris and in Rome, favorable to a Latin union, hoped that the end of the Triple Alliance had come. Instead, Marquis Prinetti, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Zanardelli Cabinet, the most friendly to France since the occupation of Tunis, renewed it in May, 1902, for ten years, without altering a single clause, but with the option of denouncing it after five years. The work of the enemies of the Triple Alliance continued indefatigably with considerable success, attaining the Anglo-French *entente* and the Franco-Spanish convention about Morocco, to such an extent that M. Delcassé, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, thought he was on the point of realizing France's chief object, the isolation of Germany. Although the project failed, the procedure of the Algeiras Conference, its conclusion, and the attitude maintained there by the Italian Delegate, Marquis Visconti Venosta, so tactfully seconded by Mr. Henry White, the American Delegate, aroused intense resentment in Germany, where Italy was accused of being a traitor. Contemporaneously, the eternal differences between Austria and Italy over the Italian provinces still subject to the Hapsburg Empire, assumed so acute a phase as to make a conflict between the two allies appear not improbable. Again the end of the Triple Alliance seemed approaching, when Herr von Tschirschky, then German Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to Rome, and left after a few weeks, with the assurance that Italy would not denounce the Alliance in 1907. It was after this agreement, and after the explanation by which it was reached, that Prince von Bülow, in his speech of November, 1906, stated that the attitude of Italy and her Delegate at Algeiras had been correct, considering her difficult position through the agreement between her and France on Morocco, which is not in contradiction with the Triple Alliance.*

* The Chancellor, on the contrary, complained strongly of the attitude of the Italian press, which, he said, did not comply, during that period, with their duties towards the Alliance. And he was right, but he should have added that it was Germany's fault. With the exception of the United States, the "Associated Press" having formed at Algeiras a special office for the occasion, the world was provided with news of the Con-

What now everybody, friends or adversaries, must understand is that the Triple Alliance, with Italy in it, is quite different from what it was a quarter of a century ago, when the Alliance was first concluded. This also appears from a recent speech which Senator Tittoni, Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered before the Chamber, the best statement of the kind ever made in the Italian Parliament. Italy practically remains in the Alliance because it protects her from a war with Austria. The resurrection of the Roman question, which twenty-five years ago Prince Bismarck could still wave as a red rag before Italians' eyes, is no more possible, although Vatican and Quirinal are officially enemies; indeed, they are officially so in order to be able to maintain in reality the best relations. Senator Tittoni made it openly understood that Italy remains in the Triple Alliance on the condition that it shall never compel her to fight England, which, considering the present grouping of the Powers, may also mean not to fight France. In fact, Germany, since the re-establishment of good relations between Paris and Rome, has often expressed the fear that if a conflict should take place between her and the Republic, the Italian Ministry would not send troops against France, or, even if they were willing, they would be prevented from doing so by public opinion manifested in so unmistakable a way as to assume the form of a rising, especially in Milan, where the soldiers, instead of going to the frontier, would be required for internal purposes. Nor can this situation be changed by the threat of an Austrian invasion of Italy, and the "promenade to Milan and Venice" of which the officers of the Dual Monarchy are so fond of speaking. At Italian headquarters, the plans of Austria in case of a war with Italy are well known. They propose, as Admiral Montecuccoli showed in the last Austrian naval manœuvres, to take possession of Ancona, making it the base of their naval operations, while Austrian troops

ference through the French "Havas Agency." Even Germany at the beginning was dependent on Paris, and it was only after a certain time that the German "Wolff Bureau" sent a representative there, but the Italian "Stefani Agency" and the Austrian "Correspondenz Bureau" had no one. Indeed the Austrian press was in no way represented, to the disgust of Count von Welsersheimb, the Austrian Delegate, who considered it almost as a condition of inferiority for his country. So Germany was asking too much—even from impartial press agencies—in expecting to have a Germanophil tone when everything came from a French source.

would land in Apulia, and taking advantage of the still unsatisfactory economic condition of the Southern provinces, would try to make them rise and march north to join with the forces at Ancona, thus threatening the heart of the peninsula and its capital. It is supposed that Italy has entered into certain agreements with the Balkan States, such as the Italo-Servian military Convention, which leaked out and which was, of course, immediately and officially denied, by which she could foment a rising of the Italian provinces subject to Austria and military action in the Balkans which would ensure her the help of half a million rifles.

All these complications will very likely never occur, but it was necessary to mention them in order to come to the conclusion that, in case of conflict between Germany and France, the most that can be obtained from Italy by her allies will be a benevolent neutrality.

SALVATORE CORTESI.